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DRUG CONSUMING SUBCULTURE AND GOLDEN AGE MYTH

The abuse of drugs radically changes the way of life. Primarily, this change takes place in accordance with the subjective intention, according to the desire of the drug consuming person. Then, during the continued consumption of drugs, the direction of the change in the way of living is more and more determined by the proper laws of the drug effect.

Drugs have been consumed by man since prehistoric times. In the history of European civilization in a broader sense, however, drug consumption has become an important social problem in the last 20 to 30 years. Beside the solitary consumers of drugs, or eventually those forming groups, the drug consuming movement expressing a protest against the existing social system has developed with an epidemic rapidity. Part of the persons disappointed with the technocratic consumers' society, losing their foothold in society, dissatisfied with the power relations, with the distribution of products and with the more and more dull strain of production, in spite of the relative prosperity, have consciously strived to try out an alternative way of life. Of the participants of the beatnik, the hippie and the yippie movements — the latter having a slight revolutionary attitude —, as well as of the participants of the anti-authoritarian students' movements stirring up great storms at the end of the sixties, many desired a real and happy life as a content of their revolt. On the ruins of discredited ideas, in antagonism with society, alienated from the community, without a personal ability to form the future, or without a hope in future, there were more and more, who sought for a happy life in the narcosis brought about by drugs. The use of these drugs has created a polarization of the protesting movements. The consumers of psychedelic drugs form separate contra- and subcultures and come into antagonism also with other revolutionary, revolting and opposing movements.¹ Among them the demarcation line is being drawn by the formation of the way of everyday life. The members of the drug-subculture want to realize in their everyday life and to live directly, what the followers of the other antisocial movements expect to attain only as a result of their daily struggles, in the future.

Looking at it as a historical phenomenon, the modern drug-consuming movement means the individual's self-experiments of social significance to modify the way of life. We speak about a drug-consuming subculture in

the sense of this definition. Thus, we do not include the consumers of banal stimulants (coffee, tobacco, etc.) and the solitary or autotelic drug consumers among the members of this subculture. The social significance is shown by the fact that in the drug consuming subculture the members speak about the disease of the society denied by them, while in society the drug consumers are spoken of as people suffering in a social disease.

The change in the way of life taking place under the effect of the drug shows itself in the novelty of the perception, of the ability and patterns of communication, as a whole of the experiences and motives, affecting also the surrounding persons. The change in the way of life, involving also the transformation of the situation, is especially distinct, if the other persons present also come under a similar drug effect. In such a case — equally keeping in view the artificial and situated character of the new models of everyday way of living exactly forcing open the frames of everydayness — we speak about a *drug scene*. From the sociological, ideological, pharmacological and psychopathological points of view, two typical drug scenes can be distinguished. The so called soft scene is characterized by the oral consumption of hallucinogenic drugs in community, by a strive to avoid physical dependence, by the seeking of the direct, started experience and enhanced high feeling to life, as well as by a certain ideological pretension and the higher proportion of young participants coming from the middle and higher classes. On the other hand, the members of the so called hard scene inject into themselves opiates and stimulants, first of all intravenously. They become indifferent also to their own community and — getting into physical dependence — slaves to the drug. Under the flash of the direct drug effect, they sink into their own hallucinated selves, or after the passing of the drug effect, they wretchedly and nervously pursue the new flashing dose of drug. They have hardly any ideological activity and mostly come of the lower classes. In typical cases these two scenes are definitely separated from each other, but drug consumption is such a one-way street, in which one regularly proceeds from the soft drugs (hashish, LSD, etc.) towards the hard drugs.

The scene brought about by the inhaling of the fume of organic solvents — corresponding to a degree of seriousness between the soft and the hard scene — was described afterwards by a 21 years old young man brought to the department of psychiatry as follows:

“My first experience connected with the inhaling of adhesive was in the beginning of my second year at the university. In the beginning it is very difficult to inhale the fume or gas, it requires a great will-power. Therefore, many do not even arrive at the hallucinations. It is as if one would get into a machine shop, where he is surrounded by a constantly increasing machine noise, buzzing, rumbling and rattling that increases up to unconsciousness. Then, as if I would drop into a new life, and experience of wonderful harmonies, calm, feeling of superiority and satisfaction, briefly an experience of success. The time to achieve all this is 4 to 5 minutes. I felt I had found the essence of life . . .

On the fourth occasion I discovered the sexual liberating effect of the «sipu» (this is how he calls the inhaled drug; this slang word originates from the Hungarian «sniff» – remark of the author). With a girl-friend of mine, with whom I had been on good terms for 6 years, upon the effect of the adhesive, I got involved in a sexual act so that we hardly noticed it. We did not feel something like this either, but a very beautiful common hallucination. She became bigger and bigger, more and more blue and transparent, while I became smaller and smaller, more and more streamlined and moving. Finally, I crossed the ocean like a ship. We were travelling to South America and at a constantly increasing rate we had the sensation of Argentina, Bolivia and Peru. We arrived in Peru. Peru was not like a country, but like a huge spherical fluffy tapestry, scattered all over with Inca patterns, *viz.* tendrils, Indian heads, etc. Suddenly this whole picture began to move. The tendrils became intertwined, the heads turned towards us, kept thrusting out their tongues, their eyes were blazing in red, and suddenly the whole carpet fell onto us...

I had another interesting hallucination here in the clinic, hiding somewhere. The patients played cards. Suddenly a great tension arose and, as if a bomb had fallen among us, and we flew over hill and dale. I also dashed along in the space. I looked back: I had a very beautiful, blue chevelure. I tried to pilot myself with it. I could not turn to the left, but to the right I could. Therefore, I turned to the right in a $3/4$ arc. During my journey in the cosmos I met several types of gods... Galaxy systems rushed past me, and the events were moving on as much quicker as the surroundings. By this I got the possibility of a perfect synthetization, an ability to recognize the relationships working according to some non-human intellectual system. For example, since I also received a companion, like Dante at the time, my travelling companion led me to a Ferris-wheel-like rotating something that symbolized the circulation of life. In the passenger compartments of the Ferris-wheel various cripples were sitting grouped according to their physical defects. For example the ears of each passenger sitting in one of the compartments were missing, etc. The Ferris-wheel was revolving quite slowly. Under it boiler-men were feeding the fire. The cripples were consulted about their complaints by faultlessly dressed gentlemen wearing white shirts and neck-ties, and smiling coldly. In general, their main worry was that there is a tremendous heat. They reassured them in a friendly manner: "Yes, please, we shall reduce the heat!"

A 30 years old man working in an eventful profession and having a good career, who found his real delight in narcosis produced by barbiturates, described the situation of drug consumption as follows. "At the given moment I either have nothing to do, or I am not doing what I should like to. There arises a gap that I cannot fill. A vacuum is formed in my brain. Then, after the consumption of the drug, everything around caesas in me, I am not compelled to think of anything. I do not daydream and I have no hallucinations either. I am feeling an absolute relief, one gets free from all earthly problems, things have no weight."

The attractive power of the soft and hard scenes is essentially identical with the attractive power of the golden age. The troublesome or boring, monotonous daily routine full of worries gives place to a direct relaxation, the state of experience-like happiness. It is not necessary to fight for or become worthy of relief and harmony, but they fall into one's hands as a natural present. The blissful overpassing of the unhappy present is not conditioned by religious tests, by the realization of ideological objectives, or by the observation of ethical norms, that is the transcendence is *not* of philosophical or *discursive character*. Bad directness is replaced by good directness, as this is automatically realized by the laws of nature in the case of drug consumption rendered efficient by the act of the consumption of the drug.

The difference between the drug scene and the golden age can be seized by the tracing back of the historical formation of the golden age myth.

Homer's Elysion (Od. IV. 563), "where the easiest existence" is waiting for the dwellers of the earth selected by the gods, is transferred with Hesiod from the otherwise hopeless scene of other-worldly life into the historical and geographic that is *earthly perspective*. Above the first human progeny, originating from the same tribe with the gods and created from bright gold, Cronos was the celestial king, "and the mortals lived with light hearts, far from trouble, just like the gods, . . . they enjoyed only good things; the soil brought the rich harvest by itself and it was a mere joy to work . . ." (Hes. Erga 108 – 116). Then, after the disappearance of the more and more weakly copper and silver peoples, the picture of the lost golden age appears again, but now in the inspiring nearness of the myths being within the sphere of human remembrance and of the distant, but not unattainable regions. Zeus sets into the world the better and truer order of the heroes, and he places many of them, after their death, to the island of the happy surrounded by the deep whirls of the Oceanus, where "the plough-land blossoms three times a year" and where – also in accordance with the theocosmological administration of justice – Cronos rules again (Hes. Erga 156 – 169). It is the fifth order of the iron age man decaying in care and trouble in which we live and from where the poet longs back in the golden age.

The process of deterioration increasing from generation to generation is broken visibly and outwardly illogically by the age of the heroes, wedged between the orders of the copper age and the iron age. In reality, however, in this modification of the universal ages inspired by living traditions and aristocratic genealogical demands² the *humanization of the golden age* is expressed: from the other world it is placed in the sphere of the *human Past* and the *human Distant*. Looking backward in time and over the horizon, of course, it is still unattainable, but in the imaginary movement, in which the Island of the Happy is shifted farther and farther with the broadening of the Greek world – from Italy to Hispania, then over the pillars of Heracles – , not only the expectation but also the animating hope can be discovered.

In the approach of Virgil, besides the enrichment of the historical

character of the golden age, the double-facedness of the golden age experience taking shape in mythological relationships also manifests itself. In his fourth eclogue (9–10) and in the Aeneid (VI, 792) he similarly heralds the coming of a new golden age, namely in the near *future*, as from the consulship of Asinius Pollio, that is at the time of the rule of Augustus Caesar. At this time, the connecting of the dawning of the golden age with political actualities was almost a common place,³ but its credit is assured by the faith in the changing of the cosmic world order. "Behold, the time has come" – the poet says – "reborn the immense series of centuries unfolds itself", the boy is living already, who in the signs of Saturn will bring back the golden age to the Earth (Verg. Ecl. IV, 4–10). The strong consciousness of the fullness of time and the restarting of the world process, the apocatastasis, in this critical age, renders men especially impressive – besides other eschatological and soteriological beliefs – to the golden age myth.

The *Present* of the predicted golden age, as reflected in its pre-experience and presentiment, shows a characteristically double aspect. The mythological references outline *the bright and dark aspects of the visualized way of life of the golden age*. These two aspects not only complete each other, but are also inseparable from each other, they seem to be two kinds of appearance of the same way of life. The predominantly bright aspect is represented by Apollo, and the predominantly dark aspect by Dionysus. In the figure of the newly born divine boy (Verg. Ecl. IV, 8) part of the ancient and modern interpreters saw Apollo, while another part saw Dionysus.⁴ According to *Virgil* the sign of the supervention of the golden age is that forthwith Apollo is ruling (Ecl. IV, 10) but at several places in the eclogues (*e.g.* VI, 15; VII, 61–62) an eminent role is given also to Bacchus, who recurrently appears under the name Iacchus used in the mysteries. A special emphasis is given by the fact that as a result of a lawsuit carried on in Rome against the Bacchus worshippers in 186 B. C., the participation in his cult was denounced for a long time (Liv. XXXIX, 18). The Dionysian features of Virgil's golden age expectation could be strengthened by his political connections existing at the time of the writing of the eclogues. Asinius Pollio, who, in 43 B. C. as governor of Gallia Transpadana rendered protection to the poet in the course of the distributions of land (Donat. Vit. Verg. Serv. ad Ecl. VI, 6; IX, 11), and whose son according to most ancient commentators is exactly the child apostrophised in eclogue IV,⁵ was a follower of Antonius (App. B. C. V, 46). Antonius, on the other hand, had widely known attraction towards the Dionysus cult, *viz.* he marched in Ephesus (Plut. Ant. 24) and Athens (Plut. Ant. 60; CIA II, 482; Vell. II, 82) as the New Dionysus, and on his tetradrachm he used Dionysian emblems (garland woven from vine-leaves and clusters of grapes, cista mystica, serpent).⁶ Later, at the time of the writing of the Aeneid, when Virgil's golden age expectation was already connected with the *Pax Augusta*, the role of Bacchus got blurred, or rather received a negative meaning (*e.g.* Aen. VI, 517; 805, the relation between Dido and Bacchus, etc.), and the significance of Apollo petrified (*e.g.* Aen. VI, 54 ff.).

The inseparable unity of the dark and bright aspects of the golden age even more intimately expressed in the own figures of Apollo and Dionysus, as in the contrast of the two. Apollo "brings the whole nature into harmony" and "the bright sunbeam is his luteplayer" (fr. I, cit.⁷), but the purest brightness in his figure is counterpointed by the deadly darkness.⁸ The mother of his mother Leto is Phoebe the moon goddess, whose name in masculine form (Phoebus) is Apollo's most important second name. In his birth similarly the dark element is instrumental, *viz.* Leto was permitted to bear only at such a place, where the sun had never shone (Hyginus 140, cit.⁹) and Apollo came into the world amidst two night-coloured waves in the island of Delos (Hom. Hymn. I, 25–27). In the figure of Dionysus, exactly inversely, the dark element emerges to the sunlight and receives a shape by it. The mother of Dionysus is Persephone and his father is Hades, the ruler of the realm of the dead. Therefore, the one time epithet of Dionysus was "khtonios", that is "underground". In his triumphal procession intoxicated with wine, in the triumph, however, recalling golden age peacefulness, the wild animals are marching gently, his beloved one, Ariadne rises to heaven from the island of Naxos after Dionysus has poured wine into her cup and manifestation, epiphany of the wine has fallen to her share.¹⁰

As can be seen, *the conjuring up of the golden age to the present goes side by side with its overshadowing*. Very likely, at the time of the writing of the Aeneid, Virgil turns away from Dionysus not only because of his joining Augustus, but also in his endeavour to eliminate the dark aspect of the golden age. As it is seen by Aeneas during his journey in the nether world, the procuress Pleasure and Dream, called the younger sister of Death, are dwelling in the shadow land of Dis, in the company of Mourning, Misery, the murderous Fight and other phantoms (Aen. VI, 270–280), the dawning second golden age, on the other hand, is shining all over the world, in a wider region than ever seen by Dionysus called by his Latin name Liber (Aen. VI. 789–807).

The elimination of the dark aspect, however, meant the denial of the wine-intoxication, the orgy and the mystery, and the stressing of the transcendent character of the golden age, and involved its transfer into a great distance, even to the other world. Christianity, among whose Old Testament traditions appears the other worldly, primeval golden age in the form of the Paradise, has monopolized the Virgilian prophecy on the birth of the divine male child in this transcendent sense. The golden age, shifting again from the present to a boundless distance, however, does no longer belong simply to the realm of Remoteness, as in the Hesiodian view, but it survives as the feeder of moral support and artistic creed in the depth of the soul, in the *domain behind man*. In the Christian religion the myth of heaven, and in art the genre of bucolic and the idyll render an opportunity to the manifestation of this domain.

The motif of reflection, the discursive conceptual elaboration of the original content situated in the depth of the mind becomes characteristic in both cases. Therefore, in the last third of the 19th century, practically

as a prelude of our modern age developing also the drug consuming subculture, the contrast of the Dionysian and Apollonian principles is revived by Nietzsche in a new interpretation. Apollo, the bright-sunny oracle god is not only the depository of all beautiful appearances, but — as noticed already by the dream interpretation of Lucretius — also the lord of dreams playing the world back and ahead.¹¹ With the stressing of the motif of reflection, a new demon, the demon of Socrates develops from him, whose aesthetic slogan is: "Everything must be understood in order that it should be beautiful" (ibid. p. 89). Dionysus, on the other hand, is the god of intoxication, inebriety (Rausch), of the liberation of the instincts, who creates fellowship among the estranged, but in song and dance relaxing men, and living in his spirit man is no longer an artist, but returning to the primeval, unreflected unity of nature, he himself becomes a work of art (ibid. p. 24).

The essence of the modern myth of the golden age is this extreme, but alluring turning into oneself and the absolutization of the dark aspect. Because what does this postulate mean that we should be the work of art of ourselves without being artists? It means the elimination of the world in the extreme sense that even our dreams should not refer to the world, but their place should be taken by a retiring, blissful inner humming. Man not only does not care for the creation of works of art any longer, but also gives up the cultivation of life. The only reality, on which it is worth while to carry out some action, is himself. In place of the historical World, extending to the boundless Distance, Past and Future, and given in the content of the Present, man's physical reality, — in everybody's own isolated physical existence — is the object of becoming happy the means of becoming happy and at the same time the embodied happiness itself. Instead of the attainable, situated behind or transcendent scenes of the World, the source, the hidden depth of individual physical existence is that scene that promises golden age happiness.

We should observe, how those prosper who in the drug scene sink down into the secret well of their physical existence. As we have seen, the breaking away from the World — the state preceding the enjoyment of drug and the first effect of the drug — similarly to the inaugurating ceremonies in general, is a painful experience. The weightless relief of breaking away from things, on the other hand, especially if it is connected with pleasant hallucinations, gives a compensation not only for the initial agony, but for all miseries of life. The relation of experiences reviewed in some detail reports on a fullness of cosmic dimensions. The cosmic pictures and the metamorphoses of the proper body, however, are of no objective, worldly meaning, but only the metaphors of undescrivable physical delight. *Timothy Leary*,¹² one of the apostles of the psychedelic movement, who earlier had been professor of psychology, rightly called these experiences "cosmic orgasm" extending over every cell of the body.

The perversity of the journey into the depth of the own body under drug effect is unmasked in the privations of the journey, in the exhausting of the bodily existence, in the fiasco of intellectual life and in the becoming unfit for social life. The journey is frequently not orgasmic, but night-

marish, or "horror-trip", as expressed in the jargon of the drug consuming subculture (see the heating scene of the relation of experiences!). Whether the trips are successful or unsuccessful, their realization requires an ever increasing dose of drug and, since the drug works its way into the metabolism of the organism, one can less and less subsist without it. This way a physical dependence develops that manifests itself in a more and more definite poisoning of the organism, frequently leading to death, and in the case of the giving up of the drug a complex of serious withdrawal symptoms arises. In the periods between the experience of the consummated moments the drug consumers are overcome by a more and more depressing fiasco experience — in the jargon "great frus" (= frustration). They do not find a sense in their own actions and — looking at things from outside — they find the attitude of the others even more repulsive. The stabilized fiasco brings about and maintains the peculiar attitude of the apathetic experience, the cool. Who adopts this attitude, stands up to the present, but does not put himself into the situation. He has no faith, but he persists, disappointments cannot wear him down, because he has given up hopes.

The historical variants of the golden age myths represent one of the forms of man's seeking for happiness, satisfaction without delay, strive for direct consummation. The main variants of these myths mark the great periods of man's self-realization from Homer up to our days. The mythical humanization of the golden age starting with Hesiod develops with Virgil to an endeavour to visualize the golden age. This visualization was accomplished in a sunny aspect, with the artistic and poetical expression of the promising fulfilment, but the dark aspect to be experienced in mysteries was necessarily attached to the sunny aspect. The transcendency was mysterious in both forms of its appearance, but it raised unconditioned faith and represented an idea living in community. The genre of the bucolic and the idyll marks the secularization of the golden age myth in the centuries, in which the Christian religion places the golden age to the Paradise. The credit of the happiness fulfilling transcendency itself, however, is not spoiled by secularization finding nourishment in the depths and hidden domain of the soul, just as the Copernican turn abolishing the geocentric view did not abolish the faith in human dignity, but, on the contrary, strengthened it. In the history of the golden age myth the scene of the drug consuming subculture means a *new dimension*, viz. in place of the Other-worldliness and This-worldliness the dimension of *bodily intimacy*. Practically, as a consequence of man's present cosmic situation, of his solitude experienced in the endless, unorientated and indifferent Universe, man — not finding and not hoping transcendency anywhere else — resorts to the last remaining capital of his existence, to his own body in order that he might extort from himself a golden age trip. The solitary consummation and spontaneity gleaming in the dimness of individual physical life, however, last only as long as the ecstasy of the intoxication. After its passing an emptiness is left behind and the embodiment of disgust and hangover steals back the despised and dreadful everydayness in an enhanced degree.

It appears — and I see the anthropological lesson furnished by the investigation of the relationship between the drug consuming subculture and the golden age myth in this statement — that *man is not capable of direct happiness*, although an immanent strive for this lives in him. Man left to himself in the absence of ideas, makes a desperate attempt with the dissolution of his own physical existence to attain direct happiness, but he does not find a transcendency of this character even sinking down into the well of his physical existence, of his carnal there-being. What remains for him, for the sober man of our age, the different forms of social and historical mediation, is already beyond the scope of our present theme.

¹ W. Gerdes — Chr. v. Wolffersdorf-Ehlert: Drogenscene: Suche nach Gegenwart. Ergebnisse teilnehmender Beobachtung in der jugendlichen Drogensubkultur. Enke, Stuttgart 1974.

² I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel: Az aranykor-mítosz és a boldogok szigetei (Golden Age Myth and the Islands of the Happy). In: *Hésiodos: Munkák és napok*. Transl., etc. by I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel. Akadémia, Budapest 1955, p. 120.

³ K. Kerényi: Vergilius, a megváltó ezredik év költője (Vergil, Poet of the Redeeming Thousandth Year). EPhK 54 (1930), p. 154.

⁴ From the literature on the question cf. M. Schanz — C. Hosius: Geschichte der römischen Literatur. 4. Aufl., Band II. 1935. (= Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft VIII. 2); as well as Pásztori Magyar Vergilius (Bucolic Hungarian Vergil). Compilation and the accompanying study by I. Trencsényi-Waldapfel, Officina. Budapest 1938.

⁵ Th. Ladewig — C. Schaper: Vergils Gedichte. 8. Aufl. bearb. v. P. Deuticke. Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, Berlin 1907. p. 47.

⁶ N. A. Maskin: Augustus principátusa (Principate of Augustus). Akadémia, Budapest 1953. Pl. III, 3.

⁷ K. Kerényi: Görög mitológia (Greek Mythology). Gondolat, Budapest 1977. p. 101.

⁸ K. Kerényi: Apollon. Studien über antike Religion und Humanität. Pantheon, Amsterdam, Leipzig 1937.

⁹ K. Kerényi: *op. cit.* (Anm. 7) p. 89.

¹⁰ K. Kerényi: *op. cit.* (Anm. 7) p. 177.

¹¹ F. Nietzsche: Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik (1870–1871). In: *Nietzsche's Werke*, Band I, Naumann, Leipzig 1905. pp. 20–22.

¹² Th. Leary: The Politics of Ecstasy. Paladin, London 1970.